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Hugh Owen Thomas
Memorial

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HUGH OWEN THOMAS
MEMORIAL

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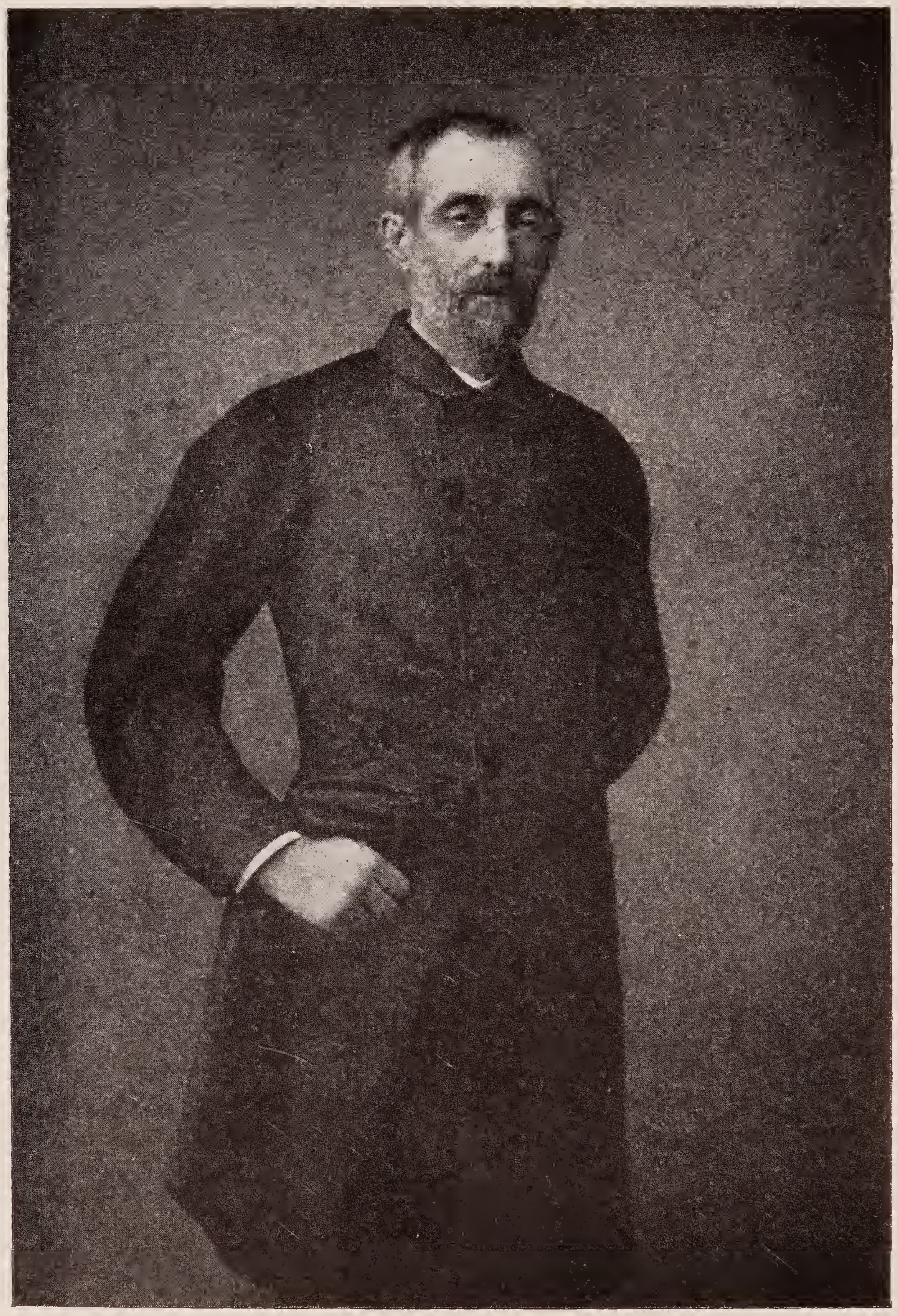

H.O. Thomas

Ο·ΒΙΟΣ·ΒΡΑΧΥΣ· Ο·ΚΑΙΡΟΣ· ·ΟΞΥΣ· Η·ΤΕΧΝΗ·ΜΑΚΡΗ·

THE MEDICAL INSTITUTION,

LIVERPOOL.

HUGH OWEN THOMAS was born in 1834, and when seventeen years old was apprenticed to his maternal uncle, Dr. Owen Roberts, of St. Asaph—a great friend of Sir Benjamin Brodie. A few years later, he commenced his medical studies at Edinburgh, in the days of Goodsir, Syme, Spence, and Simpson, with Turner as demonstrator of Anatomy.

He proceeded to University College Hospital, London, and in 1857 became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons.

Returning to Liverpool to practice—where he continued until his death in 1891—he soon became Surgeon to many workmen's Societies, Shipwrights, Carpenters, and workers in the industries associated chiefly with Liverpool Shipping and Docks. His practice was almost entirely concerned with accidents, deformities, and joint diseases.

He established a free clinic at his Surgery (on Sundays)—a method then in vogue—before the institution of Out-patient Departments at the Hospitals, which was very largely availed of by the poor of Liverpool.

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From the earlier days he devised and made his own appliances, employing an attendant blacksmith, leather workers and assistants, and towards the end of his life he was an expert metal worker, and had a large experimental workshop fitted with lathes and all the accessories of an engineer's workshop, and always laid great stress on the careful fitting of all splints, and their correction from time to time under his own supervision. He was a keen observer untrammelled by tradition, and devoted to his profession and his patients, and for twenty years denied himself any real rest—having not been absent from his work, except on one occasion, then for less than 24 hours—when he read a paper at a London Society and travelled home by the night train.

During many years he was devoting himself to observation and experiment—for he considered Surgery an "Experimental Science." His first publication in 1871 described an ingenious method of wiring fractures of the lower jaw, and emphasised the necessity of removing loose teeth in the fracture line.

A few years later his work—and in the light of to-day it was a "great" work, on "Diseases of the Hip, Knee, and Ankle joints, with their deformities, treated by a new and efficient method (1875, H. K. Lewis)," was the outcome of many years of careful investigation—applied thought and great ingenuity; it placed for all time the treatment of joint diseases on a rational and efficient basis. The appliances he invented and finally perfected have not yet been improved upon, and based as they are on such clear fundamental principles. Modern so-called "improvements" have, without exception, been retrograde.

In joint diseases his splints enabled sufferers to enjoy fresh air and exercise—he was a true pioneer of the fresh air treatment of tubercle. Without his splints patients were kept in bed with all sorts of timber applications, inefficient as regards fixation—while the sufferer, becoming weaker and weaker through pain and exhaustion, often slowly melted away in the bed clothes. The knee splint—for fractures of the femur and knee joint disease—has never been improved (if correctly made as he describes), and the great war just concluded when this treatment became universal in the allied armies, has demonstrated its invaluable service in effectively fixing fractured femurs, diminishing shock during transit, and saving limb and life.

His observations on paralysed muscles—being stretched by their opponents, and the supreme importance of position to prevent this—laid the foundation of the essential after treatment of all motor nerve injuries.

He strongly opposed the routine exercise of diseased joints, so prevalent in his day, and subsequent events have shown how correct his views were.

The treatment of delayed union of fractures by producing passive congestion "damming the circulation," anticipated the "Bier's method" by many years.

His manipulative treatment of club foot in infants was designated in error "Lorenz's Bloodless Surgery" twenty years later.

His clinic was the resort of distinguished Surgeons from all over the world, and his ideas were in those days far better known in distant parts than even in his own town.

He was elected a member of the American Orthopædic Society, and received an honorary degree of M.D. from St. Louis, U.S.A.

He was truly one of the founders of Orthopædic Surgery—ploughing his lone furrow—but time has fully confirmed his observations, ideas, and methods of treatment.

This institution—of which he was a member and for a time Vice-President—during his professional career, is proud of his association with it, and no greater compliment could have been paid to his memory, ideas, and principles of treatment, than the selection of his nephew, Major-General Sir Robert Jones, C.B. (who during his early professional life was intimately associated with his work), to the important position of Director of Orthopædic Surgery to the British Army during the war—with such advantage to the wounded soldier and the Nation.

This Institution feels this a fitting time to suggest the perpetuation of the memory of Hugh Owen Thomas, by the foundation of a Memorial lectureship in perpetuity, and the providing of a bust or statue.

H. O. THOMAS' PUBLISHED WORKS

On Intestinal Obstruction, 1877.

The principles of the treatment of joint diseases, 1878.

Inflammation, ankylosis—reduction of joint deformity, bone setting.

Fractures, Dislocations, diseases and deformities of the bones of the spine and the upper extremity, 1887.

Supplement to (1) *Collegians of* 1686 *and to Collegians of* 1885.

Fractures of the lower jaw, 1875.

Spinal deformities.

The principles of the treatment of fractures, deformity, and diseases of the lower extremity, 1890.

The inhibition of nerves by drugs—a contribution to the art of prescribing, 1883.

Lithotomy.